

A Tale of Three Towers

by David Cawley

If it hadn't been for the war-time ban on ringing, the bells of Bristol might have been in action ready for Evensong on Sunday, November 24th, 1940. One way or another. The eight bells in Temple or Holy Cross Church were only rung about half-a-dozen times a year, but the new chiming apparatus was much used. On the other side of the City, St. Andrew's – Clifton Parish Church as it was always known – had until the outbreak of war an active band, most of them in their twenties. Their light octave had been rehung only four years before and was highly prized. Then there was Christ Church, on Clifton Green. A decade later the events of that night were to link them through their bells. But Christ Church had only one bell.

Instead of bells, it was sirens, and for much of that terrible night the City suffered the most deadly attack it was ever to face. A few weeks earlier, it had been Coventry, whose Cathedral bells chiming through the night until electricity was cut off, had been an inspiration to many. The only bells to be heard in Bristol were falling ones and it was a near miracle that more were not destroyed. In the centre – or what had been the centre – four medieval churches had been gutted. The octaves at St. Peter (the City's oldest church) and St. Mary-le-Port just to the west crashed to the ground; St. Nicholas ten bells, where the curfew had rung for centuries hung cracked and useless in their H-frame.

Over Bristol Bridge, near Temple Meads station, fearsome damage had been done. St. Mary Redcliffe stood relatively undamaged nearby. A group of Sappers was busy in the neighbourhood making safe damaged buildings and had turned their attention to Temple Church. This too had been gutted and they observed that its tower was distinctly out of plumb. It would have to come down, as they told an elderly Bristolian who went as fast as he could to fetch the Vicar. Canon Welchman had not been Archdeacon of Bristol for nothing; although he didn't ask if they had a Faculty he did ask about the explosives they were laying around his church tower. "Look at the way it leans, Sir: it's got to come down." "Well, boys, if that's the only reason, you had better let it be ... you see it's been like that for five hundred years." The Archdeacon saved the day, and the tower, and the eight bells in it, which had not been damaged.

Across the City, in St. Andrew's, Clifton Parish Church, they had been celebrating their Patronal Festival when the oil bomb landed on the roof. I told the story in my article *The Bells of Clifton*, which was published in the *RW* ten years ago. Since then a number of pieces of information have come to light which correct errors or supply missing information in that article. The courage of the Parish Church clergy and people (ill-repaid by the Diocese in later years) was exemplified in their continuing their festival in the crypt (until that became too hot) and finishing in the churchyard whilst their church blazed and its bells melted in the heat. As all this was happening, elsewhere in the City, Stephen Wood, one of the Parish Church ringers was tragically killed. He was deeply mourned – Will Willans recalls the late Bill Brown saying, "He was so enthusiastic, so keen, that when you were with him – well you couldn't but get on." Canon Bothamley, kept out of the highly dangerous ruin, erected a large poster outside, "CAST DOWN BUT NOT DESTROYED". A remarkable man, he kept his people together by

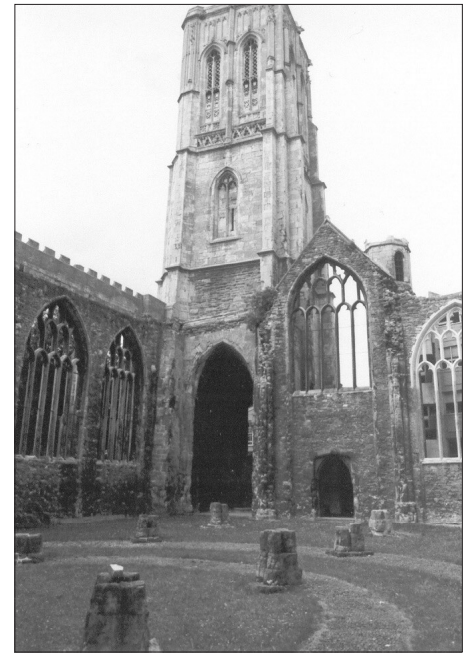
commandeering the former St. James Church in Victoria Square, closed in 1928 and then occupied by the BBC. For eleven years this was to be their home. Conveniently the BBC had divided it horizontally, so that the upper part formed the church (a tight squeeze) and the lower one made a useful hall. There were originally two small chiming bells in a central gable; an organ was imported, and new choir stalls were given in memory of Stephen Wood. When the Parish Church ruins became accessible, the Tower Master, Mr H. S. Gregory, tackled the mass of fallen bell metal in the base of the tower and stored it away in the cellars of St. James.

On Clifton Green, the great spire of Christ Church must have been a useful landmark for the bombers in their deadly work. It was also a natural target, and yet the bombers did not come to Christ Church. Two other of Clifton's Anglican Churches, All Saints and Holy Trinity were later bombed, and both subsequently rebuilt. The Revd Walter Winter was no doubt in his church giving thanks for its preservation. At least he didn't have to worry about the contents of that mighty tower – Christ Church had only one bell.

"Temple Church has been destroyed by enemy action but the tower and bells are undamaged", wrote T. H. Young, the Secretary to the Temple Vestry Estate on June 13th, 1941 to John Taylor & Co. "We should like to save the bells as we believe they are a good lot ... The Trustees think they should be stored somewhere in the Country, say in a shed, or even in a field under the earth, if this would not damage them. What is your opinion?" Taylors had been busy with many blitzed or endangered churches, not least in Bristol. Early in the war, the heavy twelve at St. Mary Redcliffe had been taken down for safety, and were buried under sandbags in the church. Immediately after the November raid they had been summoned to St. Nicholas to lower the nine bells which still hung and to place them in the ruins. In June 1941 they had recovered the six fallen bells and lowered the two still hanging at St. Peter's. Perhaps it was the latter operation that stirred the Temple Vestry into action. They quoted £47 for taking down the bells and placing them outside ("we do not think they would be any safer buried in a field"), and £21 for taking them to Loughborough. There, they added, "they would not be absolutely immune from risk of damage, but Loughborough is certainly a safer place than Bristol!" The costs of reinstating the ring would be similar; but if they were destroyed it would cost them £1,500. Taylors duly lowered the bells, which found a temporary home in Temple School. And there they were to remain for seventeen years.

Meanwhile, at Clifton, Hedley Gregory and his helpers had secured what they could of their bells and deposited it in the cellar of St. James. Taylors had written immediately after the raid commiserating with the Vicar and offering to visit to assess the damage and to estimate for salvaging and storing the metal, and for subsequent reinstatement. They wrote again the following August, but without acknowledgement.

Redcliffe bells were rehung in 1944. In 1959, four bells were cast from St. Nicholas ring of ten: for details of this tower see my article *The City of the Heavy Fours* in the *RW* at the end of 1984, and Chris Pickford's subsequent article



Temple Church, Bristol. The tower does lean away from the viewpoint. Note the foundations of the original aisled round nave marked out in the foreground

Bristol – the Higher Numbers. St. Peter's fire-damaged eight were finally sold as scrap to Taylors in 1963; a few years before they had purchased recovered metal stolen from St. Mary-le-Port. Long before this, there had been activity in Clifton, centred on Christ Church: and Christ Church had only one bell.

Before looking at the events of 1952-5 it is necessary to understand what was happening with the Bristol and Clifton churches. As early as 1936, a policy of weeding out in "over-churched" areas had been implemented. Five churches closed in that year: three were demolished in 1938. Then came the war, which naturally changed everything. The two surviving churches were resurrected to serve bombed-out congregations – St. Andrew-the-Less, Clifton for Holy Trinity, Hotwells; and St. John-on-the-Wall for St. Mary-le-Port. As we have seen, Clifton Parish Church had taken its own line, "Cast down, but not destroyed", and found itself again in St. James, Victoria Square. Temple Church was to have no such resurrection. In 1941, Archdeacon Welchman, to whom we owe the preservation of the tower, resigned. He had been Vicar since 1907 (and Archdeacon of Bristol 1927-1938), during which time his parish, together with the neighbouring St. Thomas (which became vacant in 1946), had become increasingly non-residential. There was never any intention of rebuilding Temple Church, and it is a matter of thankfulness that the Office of Works (now English Heritage) took over and consolidated the ruins. The parish was absorbed in St. Mary Redcliffe; the Temple Trustees, however, continued to exist, as they do to-day, and they did not forget their bells.

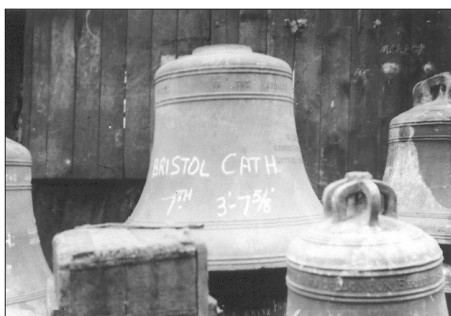
The earliest Temple Church, as its name suggests, was built by the Knights Templar. It had an aisled, oval nave and rectangular chancel. Dedicated to The Holy Cross, it was probably not dissimilar in plan to the Round Church in the Temple, London, or that in Cambridge. The foundations of this church were excavated when consolidation of the ruins was taking place, and they are now laid out in cobbles within the existing nave. The chancel was first rebuilt in the Decorated style of the

13th century, followed by the nave in the 14th. To this was attached a tower, construction of which commenced circa 1390. Like the Sappers of 1940, at some point someone noticed that it was not vertical: there was a considerable lean to the south-west. Work stopped until the inclination settled. Already they had a fine tower some 70 feet high, with a lofty and richly panelled arch into the south aisle and an elaborate west face at ground level – if level is the right word! Temple Church had become and was to remain the third richest Living in Bristol (after Redcliffe and Westbury-on-Trym). As the church grew more prosperous – leading to the legend that the tower’s lean was due to the foundations being on woolsacks – so did the desire to complete the now apparently stable structure. The belfry stage was being completed circa 1460 when it was observed that the increased weight had put the tower on the move again. The top string-course was completed but the leads were left dead flat. The tower was now 114 feet high. Internally it was strengthened with a most beautiful stone vault to the ground floor. The belfry stage is one of the glories of Bristol having eight great sound openings with their stone traceried panels. The lean finally stopped at 5’4” (1.5 m), which it has been for at least two hundred years. Apart from some calcining of the tower arch, it remains very much as it was built, allowing for Victorian restoration and repair. Survival was almost certainly due to the strength of the stone vault which prevented flames rising through, and to the lack of a parapet. The tower roof is set with the lean of the tower (unlike the floors within), and incendiaries rolled off before they had time to melt the lead and set the timber below alight.

The oldest of Temple bells is the Sanctus, probably the work of a Bristol founder c.1380. There were four large bells by 1657, in which year William and Richard Purdew recast the two smaller. A year later, they were back adding two trebles, one of which survives to-day. The two tenors were in their turn recast in 1721, the founder, Thomas Bilbie of Chew Stoke, expressing on the then 5th, “A seventh bell I hope shall be”. The hope was fulfilled five years later, when he added two trebles to complete the octave, returning to recast the 4th in 1740. This ring of eight was as follows:-

Treble (33³/₈”) : * MR. IOHN STANTON : MR. EDWARD WHITCHVRCH : CHVRCH WARDENS 1726 * / * MY SOVND IS GOOD WHICH THAT YOV HEAR YOVNG BILBIE MADE ME SOVND SO CLEAR / GOD BE PRAISED * * * * *

2nd (33”) (border of fleurs-de-lis) * MR. IOHN STANTON : MR. EDWARD WHITCHVRCH * CHVRCH WARDENS : 1726 * * / * COME LET VS ALL SOVND OVT . ILE KEEP MY PLACE NO DOVBT : SING PRAISE TO GOD * / THO BILBIE CASTED ME * * * * *



The Temple Church Bells, destined for Bristol Cathedral, arrive at Loughborough in 1958



Temple Church bell-chamber to-day. Cast-iron A frame by John Taylor & Co, 1887. The chiming hammers were added in 1935 and the bells removed in 1941

3rd (34⁵/₈”) : 16 + 58 VENITE * EXULTEMUS * DOINO (border) / IOHN * HAVKINS * IOHN * GRAY * CHVRCH * WARDINGS * W(bell)P R(bell)P *

4th (36³/₈”) : MR WILLIAM COLLOTT AND MR IOHN BEVEN CHVRCH WARDENS 1740 BILBIE FECIT

5th (37¹/₂”) : CANTAE DOMINO CANTICVM NOMM A C M R C W (bell) W(bell)P(bell) R(bell)P(bell) 16+57

6th (40¹/₂”) : IMMEDIO ECCLESIAE TIBIHYMNOS PSALLAM A C M R C W (bell) W(bell)P(bell) R(bell)P(bell) 16+57

7th (43⁷/₈”) : * MR. ROBERT * CAM * MR IOHN * STANTON * CH\$\$ WARDENS * BILBIE * CAST * ME 1721 * / * A * SEVENTH * : BELL * I : HOPE * SHALL * BE * AND * WITH * YOV * ALL * SING * MERYLIE * * * * *

Tenor (49¹/₂”) : 1721 * BILBIE * * CAST * ME * * * * * WHEN * I * DO * CALE * COM * SERVE * GOD * ALL / MR. RO\$\$ * CAM * * MR. IOHN * STANTON * CH * W *

Sanctus (15¹⁵/₁₆”) : (crown) S A N C T A M A R I A O R A P R O N O B I S

A chiming barrel was formerly in the tower, and it is possible that this was also Bilbie’s work. Appropriately, the tune played was “Haste to my Temple”. In 1887, the tower was restored at a cost of £2,500; the bells were rehung by John Taylor & Co in a massive cast-iron High A-frame on a timber foundation resting on compound steel girders. The four largest bells were recast; the 7th and tenor had been cracked for some while and the 5th and 6th were reckoned to be poor bells. The recast bells, 38”, 39³/₈”, 43⁵/₈” and 49”, are all inscribed the same, proclaiming the occasion of the restoration:

IN THE JUBILEE YEAR OF OUR GRACIOUS QUEEN VICTORIA 1887 / (waist) W. HAZELDINE. VICAR. / ROBERT. H. SYMES} / ARTHUR. E. WHITE} CHURCHWARDENS // (opposite) (large bell medallion with JOHN TAYLOR & CO. / LOUGHBOROUGH)

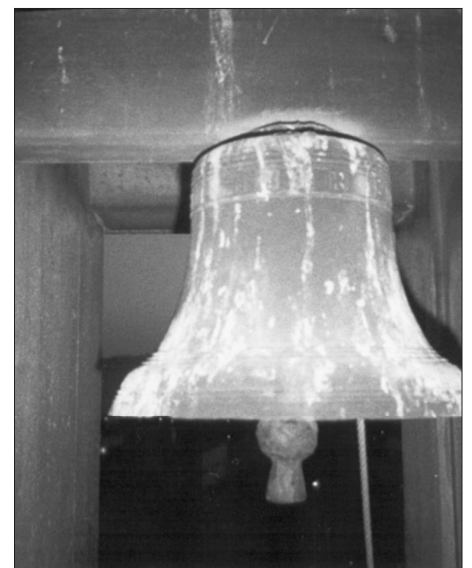
There are a number of variations in Ellacombe’s and other renderings of the inscriptions on the pre-1887 bells. Mine relate to personal examination of the four survivors, now at the Cathedral and to the Sanctus at Filwood Park, and to a 19th century guide book to the church, whose writer was at pains to produce an accurate rendering. The * mark represents a rosette; underlined letters are upside down on the bells; the bad Latin on the 3rd, former 5th and former 6th is as rendered; and \$ indicates a Bilbiesque contraction.

The book referred to gives the note of the tenor as flat of F; in 1887 the new bells were tuned to E and the four trebles tuned down. When eventually they were transferred in 1958, they were again tuned to Eb. The two added in 1658 were cast on a very heavy scale and the trebles of 1726 were made to match them. The 4th recast in 1740 was for a long while the lightest bell in the tower. This is shown by the following table of weights:

Bell	pre-1887 Cwt qr lb	1887-1958 Cwt qr lb	Present-day Cwt qr lb
Treble	9 1 26	8 3 22	8 2 8
Second	9 0 12	9 0 7	8 1 8
Third	9 2 0	9 0 18	8 3 24
Fourth	9 0 4	8 2 26	8 1 24
Fifth	10 0 0	10 2 12*	10 1 0
Sixth	11 3 0	11 1 10*	10 3 10
Seventh	15 1 0	14 1 12*	13 3 12
Tenor	20 1 20	21 1 24*	21 0 1

Sanctus 0 3 3
*bell recast

Thus the bells remained until 1935 when they were provided with ball bearings and new rollers. This happened almost by accident, the Temple Vestry’s main concern being to install a new chiming apparatus. The bells were rung only about half a dozen times a year and were ‘clocked’ on the remaining occasions. Only four true peals were rung, between 1892 and the last on October 1st 1927. The chiming apparatus cost the Vestry £46, and rehanging the bells on ball bearings £113.5/=. It was about this time that the late Sid Riches, Tower Master at St. Werburgh’s, became involved in ringing at Temple Church, being a pharmacist as Hodder’s, nearby. Sid often used to recall ringing at Temple and wrote in 1988, “In the early 1930’s I was able to join in the occasional ringing at Temple Church ... a visit to the Temple ringing chamber was quite an experience. The lean of the tower was noticeable and there was some movement when ringing took place. There was a queer sensation that the ropes were hanging off vertical, which of course was only an illusion. The ropes fell awkwardly as a circle with several very close to the walls of the tower. But I enjoyed the bells for their music and ringers of to-day will appreciate this. How thankful we must be for the wisdom of the Temple Trustees in asking Taylors to remove the bells. The generosity of Lady Wills enabled the project of transferring



The Temple Church 14th-century Sanctus Bell, now at Holy Cross Church, Filwood Park, Bristol

the bells to the Cathedral and the glorious ring of eight were rehung in the north-west tower.”

This was put to the test about the time Mr Riches wrote. Nicholas Bowden and I discovered the old Temple Church bellropes in a box at St. Thomas (whence most of the ringers hailed) and having been given access to the tower by English Heritage, we hung the eight ropes down through the rope holes into the ringing chamber. The impression of being “all at sea” was immediately clear; the floors being level, the ropes hanging plumb and the tower lean being as conspicuous inside as out! We got Sid along into that great, bare, gloomy ringing room. Apparently it was always like that, he told us. The only ornament is the Ellacombe chiming manual in the south-west corner. It is not a lofty apartment, but above is a very tall chamber through which the ropes passed in chutes. In the centre hangs a heavy plumb bob by which the lean of the tower is monitored. It was whilst climbing the newel stair at this stage that one becomes aware of the effect of the lean. The “upward slope” is certainly good exercise. The bell chamber still contains Taylors’ massive cast iron A-frame, maintained in excellent condition by English Heritage. The bearing bolts are still screwed back in position, and the Ellacombe hammers stand pathetically in the pits. At higher level is a neat little wooden frame which formerly held the Sanctus bell. A further climb brings one to the roof, an experience not recommended for the nervous. I once lay flat looking over the overhanging side. Only once.

Back in 1952, things were changing in post-war Bristol. The Churches Reorganisation Areas Measure had been passed by the Church Assembly in 1944, at the same time as Dr F. A. Cockin had become Bishop of Bristol. The Diocesan Reorganisation Committee was its immediate consequence, and it at once set to work on three areas of Bristol, City, Temple and Clifton, armed with draconian powers. Its successor in 1950, no less draconian, was the Diocesan Pastoral Committee. That continues to this day; I was a member from 1988 until 1995, by which time it had become rather more what its title says. I had a unique opportunity to read files and minutes in the Diocesan Church House archive and was able to follow to some extent the ‘Clifton saga’. Even as late as that, some of the proceedings were considered so delicate that many of the papers were retained at Bishop’s House.

A problem with most Dioceses until quite recent years was the disparity in value – the Incumbent’s yearly income – between the various parishes. Temple was the ‘third best’ (£773); next came Christ Church, Clifton (£731) and sixth Clifton Parish Church at £700. These were not small sums in those days. The DRC had its problems with Temple solved with the Vicar’s retirement and the decision not to rebuild. There was no acrimony, especially as the Temple Vestry’s prerogatives were guaranteed by the new parish church, St. Mary Redcliffe. But what was to be plain sailing in Temple was anything but in Clifton. The DRC and its successor saw it as over-churches. In particular, Christ Church was undamaged in the war and had ample facilities. The Parish Church was in ruins but the life of its parish continued unabated. In 1949, a proposal was published that the Parish Church should not be rebuilt; indeed, it should be demolished, its income “ported” to another parish or parishes and that Christ Church should become the parish church in its place. It was at this time that the bells of Temple Church were offered to Christ Church. For Christ Church, it will be remembered, had only one bell.



Clifton Parish Church c.1900, shortly before its 8 bells were rehung by Llewellins & James

The way in which the Union of Benefices was accomplished was an ugly one. In many parishes, clergy especially had been outraged by the tone and contents of letters from Church House, and it has been said that “The Bishop and the Archdeacon felt it necessary to place humanity and consideration for their clergy in a secondary position. For the good of the church, and for its survival (as they saw it), many of the deficiencies which one gentleman could expect from another were sacrificed on the altar of expediency ... The higher clergy had found a new morality and incumbents, who swore the oath of canonical obedience to their Bishop and his successors, now found that there was no such thing as reciprocal obligation which could be relied on. In a climate where obfuscation, lack of candour, hidden motives and lack of humanity flourished, can the resultant problems and claims of ‘bad faith’ made by the clergy and laity alike against the diocese be wondered at? These new “management techniques”, borrowed from industry were felt by those at the top to be good for the church, but their lack of professionalism revealed in their handling of such matters showed that they had a great deal to learn.” Some things don’t change. At Clifton, the Reorganisation Committee met on 25th April 1949, suggesting *inter alia* that The Parish Church should not be rebuilt; that Christ Church should become the Parish Church; that Mr Winter (of Christ Church) should be effectively pensioned



Clifton Parish Church – The Bells return after recasting the tenor and tuning by Mears & Stainbank, August 1936. Four years later they were destroyed

off with an annuity; and that Canon Bothamley, as Vicar of Clifton, should become first Incumbent of the united benefice. “Contrary to every moral precept” was the message to the Bishop who himself met the aggrieved clergy and parishioners at a meeting in June. Between him and Mr Winter there were angry exchanges, and a personal attack was made upon Canon Bothamley. The suffragan Bishop of Malmesbury had to appeal for “wisdom, charity, self-restraint, mutual trust and sympathy”, qualities which the Committee on which he sat failed clearly to display. To sum up, St. Andrew’s wanted The Parish rebuilt; and Canon Bothamley wished to remain their Vicar. Christ Church (in the persons of three retired high-ranking army officers and the church wardens) wished for their part to retain their Vicar, and he had no wish to go. The temptation to go into further detail must be resisted: Canon Bothamley accepted the Living of Stoke Bishop in October, being rather unctuously “commended for his loyalty to the committee”. Mr Winter similarly departed for Winchester soon afterwards, the difference in his stipend being made up by an annuity from the Diocese of Bristol. The Clifton Reorganisation scheme was published in *The London Gazette* on March 11th 1952; the War Damage Payment for The Parish Church was “ported” to build the new church of St. Andrew, Hartcliffe; and the ruins of The Parish Church (except the tower) were to be demolished. Even at this late stage the proposals were valiantly resisted by the congregation of The Parish Church. A final “kick over” was Diocesan refusal to take responsibility for the tower and it too was demolished, the Diocese claiming “any bells or bell metal that might be in it.” It required a new Incumbent of great tact and understanding to bring the two parishes together. That this was successfully achieved was due entirely to the Simeon Trustees’ nomination of The Revd Harold Oakley.

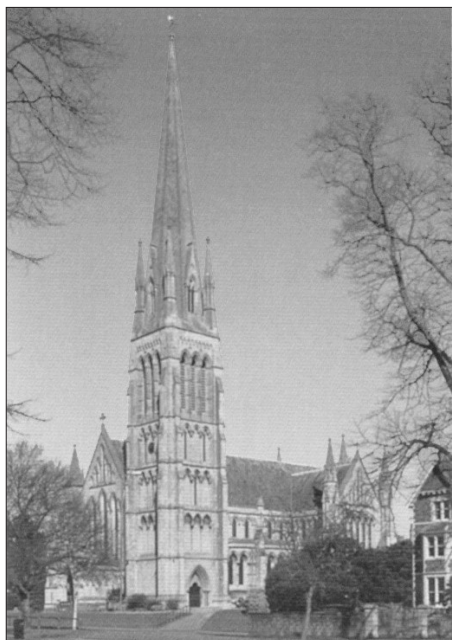
The Parish missed its bells. My previous article described their history. In summary, the ancient church had two, which were transferred to the new church built in 1822, the tenor being recast in 1838 by Jefferies and Price. I think that the frame for eight was also put in at this time, as drawings existing in J. P. Fidler’s notebook at Loughborough show a rather amateur structure; a similar one of 1834, for six bells, existed until 1992 at Frenchay, near Bristol, and I can see the similarities. Seven smaller bells were added to make a ring of eight in 1868, these being hung by Thomas Hale, of Bristol. In 1905, they were rehung with all new fittings in the existing frame by Llewellins and James of the City. My article deals with the 1936 restoration when the tenor was recast and the remainder hung with new frictional parts. In fact, the proposals for restoration were hotly contested by Mears & Stainbank and John Taylor & Co. Mears’ estimate for the work, including substantial strengthening of the frame, was £197..2/=; Taylors’ was for £196..15/= but did not include any work to the frame except tightening where possible. “If this will not reduce the movement of the frame”, said Mr Fidler, “I cannot see what else will”. The job went to Mears, the resulting ring being:

Treble: (25³/₈”; 3-3-1): ROBERT STAINBANK, FOUNDER, LONDON 1868

2nd: (26¹/₂”; 3-3-20): ROBERT STAINBANK, FOUNDER, LONDON 1868

3rd: (28”; 4-2-4): MEARS & STAINBANK, FOUNDERS, LONDON 1867

4th: (29¹/₂”; 4-2-27): ROBERT STAINBANK, FOUNDER, LONDON 1868



Christ Church, Clifton. Only one Bell

5th: (32"; 5-2-11): ROBERT STAINBANK, FOUNDER, LONDON 1868

6th: (34"; 6-2-1): ROBERT STAINBANK, FOUNDER, LONDON 1868

7th: (37½"; 8-2-15) ROBERT STAINBANK, FOUNDER, LONDON 1868

Tenor: (41"; 11-3-26; G) JEFFERIES & PRICE FECIT BRISTOL 1838 / THOMAS CARLISLE } / CLEMENT MILLWARD } CHURCHWARDENS /

(waist) L. J. BAGGOTT, M. A., VICAR / W. H. CHIVERS } / R. LOVERIDGE } CHURCHWARDENS / H. S. GREGORY TOWER MASTER /

(soundbow) RECAST MEARS & STAINBANK LONDON 1936

The front bells seem to have been made up as a stock set; but they enjoyed a good reputation especially in their short life after rehang. In the years immediately prior to this, there had been no service ringing, as opposed to practices and peals. Service ringing resumed with the restoration; but Mr Gregory did not (according to Will Willans) approve of peals. The last, Cambridge Major, was rung on 15th March, 1937. The effect of the blitz upon the tower was calamitous, and I have heard it stated that it could be seen blazing furiously for miles, including from Dundry, in Somerset. One would like to think that Hedley Gregory found his name amidst the shattered metal which was carted off to St. James.

Following his Institution, The Revd H. R. Oakley addressed a problem. The former Parish Church had a highly prized ring of bells. Christ Church *did* apparently at one time have a set of eight tubes, which had been scrapped. "Hush! Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon – we have a gramophone!" were Mr Oakley's words to Will Willans' father when the subject of bells was raised. He was keenly conscious that Christ Church was deficient in this respect, and that it had been one of the points at issue with regard to the former Parish Church. Then came the offer of the Temple Church bells, a comparatively heavy ring, a matter handed over handed over to J. Ralph Edwards, the eminent Bristol architect, to deal with.

Christ Church spire is 212 feet high – second only to St. Mary Redcliffe. The tower itself is

less than 16 feet square internally, although throughout its height the walls are over four feet thick. The ground floor contains the gallery staircase and is 24 feet high; the first floor, which Taylor's designated the ringing chamber, is 23 feet high. The clock room above this has a height of 17 feet; above that is the present bell chamber, 23 feet. This latter chamber they felt far too high for a ring of the weight of the Temple bells; and they suggested removing the floorboards, leaving just the joists and a railed platform 2'6" wide around the tower walls. The existing bell to be removed, the clock re-sited, and the Temple bells hung in the clock chamber with the clock in the upper portion of the room below; the lower half would form the ringing room. In common with many Victorian churches there were ducts and staircases in precisely the wrong places, and even that one bell is badly installed. For the record, it is 26 5/8" diameter, 4-0-16 in F#, and inscribed G MEARS & CO FOUNDERS LONDON 1861. It is hung with a wheel, but no stay or slider and was hung by Moore's (who supplied the beautiful clock movement below) in an oak frame which is not square in the tower.

"It is our considered opinion," wrote Taylors in response to Mr Edwards' enquiry, "that provided this peal of bells is hung at the level in the tower we advise and equipped with new curved headstocks to reduce the forces exerted by the swinging of the bells, also hung in a framework of the construction we recommend, the ring of eight bells from Temple Church could be installed in the tower of Christ Church, Clifton, without any risk to the future safety of the tower and spire as a result of the ringing of the bells in full swing". To do this would cost £1,120, plus £80 if the Ellacombe apparatus was brought from Temple church, less an allowance for the G Mears bell.

Nothing further was heard, other than that "developments have arisen". In December, noting that the *Church Times* had carried a short piece on the union of the Clifton parishes, Taylors wrote to the architect mentioning their visit regarding the ex-Temple Church bells, and asking if the former Parish Church bells or their remains were to be given to Christ Church. In a reply a fortnight later, Mr Edwards told them, "It has been decided not to install bells in the tower of Christ Church." Nothing daunted, Taylors immediately remembered Mr Gregory, the former Tower Master, with whom they had dealt in 1935. A very cordial reply arrived in time for Christmas: "Yes, we managed to get some of the bellmetal out of the ruins – probably enough to cast two or three bells ... I have consulted the Vicar, the Rev. H. R. Oakley and he has given permission. (Your representative) could then see the bell metal and inspect the Tower, and give an estimate, including the bell metal from the old Church, for a peal of 8 bells with a Tenor of about 12 cwt. I may say they have had an architect to examine the Tower and spire, and he says it will be safe to carry a light peal of bells; but nothing has been decided by the Church Council yet." John Fidler duly inspected on 5th January 1953 and found "this metal consists of a lot of clinker, small pieces of metal and a few lumps of bells. I told Mr Gregory no one could say what there was until all the small stuff had been melted and the bell metal run off." He added that "Mr Hughes had put in a scheme to the Vicar for £2400, but had no idea of the specification ... Mr Gregory has been a Mears fan for years and he was the one who got them the job of rehang. The old Clifton Parish Church Bells, he also got Mears in at Emmanuel, Clifton ... now he says that he prefers that we do the Christ Church job."

The job was to be a 14-cwt eight in F# costing £2,500 or £2,300 for a 12-cwt tenor in G, both less old metal estimated at £240 and £20 for the old bell. While this was considerably more than the ex-Temple job, the Foundry was at pains to point out that far less tower work would be necessary, as the bells could safely be hung in the original bell chamber. "Christ Church tower is a very fine one and the peal with the 14-cwt tenor would sound very well indeed when installed." Having heard nothing by April, the firm wrote to Hedley Gregory and Mr Edwards; the reply from the latter indicates that he clearly had not seen the report and estimate. A further enquiry to Mr Gregory brought a reply from the Church Warden, Mr W. H. Ryman, stating that "a firm decision has not been made with regard to the old bells in that we are waiting further information in connection with the War Damage Claim." In November, he wrote again "to inform you that a provisional decision has been made that a peal of bells will not be installed in Christ Church." Hedley Gregory also wrote to the same effect, "because they cannot get War Damage for same. Needless to say I am very disappointed after trying so long." John Fidler replied personally, "It seems strange to me that the War Damage Commission will not pay any compensation as even if the bells themselves were not insured under part II of the War Damage Act the Church would be entitled to compensation for the bellframe and supporting beams under Part I of the Act ... I can assure you that if the Church has not received compensation for the loss of the bellframe they are entitled to do so."

The final curtain came a year later, Mr Ryman writing to Loughborough enquiring what offer Taylors would make for the remaining metal of the old bells. The offer of £12 per cwt was accepted with the significant words, "Would you make your cheque payable to the Bristol Diocesan Board of Finance." This suggests that the War Damage Claim had been settled and "ported" in favour of others. Finally, after some hitch, the metal arrived in Loughborough on 2nd March, 1955. The gross weight of "material received, i.e. metal fused with all sorts of debris including stone, plaster, lead, etc" was 23-cwt; the actual nett weight of bell metal recovered was 17-2-0, for which £209.10/= was allowed. In the same month, despite the original assurances, the tower of the old Parish Church was demolished.

"No doubt it will be agreed that this is a somewhat melancholy conclusion to Clifton Parish Church Bells but we hope sincerely that this is only the ending of a phase and that in the not-far-distant future a good ring of eight bells may be installed in the tower of Christ Church and that in this way the bells will rise again," wrote John Taylor & Co. "We hope that should that happy time arrive ... we shall be the bellfounders selected." "The penultimate paragraph of your letter," replied Mr Ryman, "has been conveyed to the present powers."

Of course, it is not the end of one part of the story: as we all know, the ex-Temple Church bells were acquired through the intervention of Dame Monica Wills and hung in Bristol Cathedral's north-west tower, where all can enjoy them to-day. The Sanctus bell was hung at Holy Cross Church, Filwood Park, Knowle West, and is indeed a survivor, for the original church of 1960 became unsafe and was demolished and a new church built in 2000. It contains several treasures from Temple Church including the Sanctus bell. Yet another opportunity was lost in 1976 when the vintage Taylor eight became available on the demolition of Emmanuel, Clifton. Few churches can have

had sixteen bells and the remains of another octave available and turned them all down. So, Christ Church, Clifton, has only one bell.

I am indebted especially for information and advice from the late Sidney Riches; Nicholas and Richard Bowden; Chris Pickford and William Willans.

I am also grateful to The Editor for allowing me to quote previous articles that have appeared in The Ringing World.

Clearly, A Tale of Three Towers could not have been written without the kindly assistance of the Bell Founders. The late Mr William Hughes of The Whitechapel Bell Foundry Ltd provided all the information regarding his firm's involvement at Clifton Parish Church in 1935. John Taylor Bellfounders Ltd allowed me access to their closed archive and discovery of their misplaced Clifton Parish Church (St. Andrew) file and their co-operation in using it has made some sense of this rather sad story.

I also owe my thanks to the Secretaries and officers past and present of the Bristol Diocesan Board of Finance who allowed me to study the records of the works of the Reorganisation and Pastoral Committees during my time as a member of the latter.

I commend the following: The Church of England and the City of Bristol: change, retreat and decay – reform, revival and renewal? Dr M. J. Crossley Evans in Post-War Bristol, 1945 – 1965, ISSN 1362 7759, Bristol, 2000.

New Anglican Churches in 19th century Bristol. Peter Cobb and Elizabeth Ralph. Bristol, 1990.

The Rebuilding of All Saints, Clifton. Fr Peter Cobb. Clifton, 1992.

The Story of Clifton Parish Church 1154-1954. B. J. Bendell. 1954.

FROM THE E-LISTS

A round-up from the internet compiled by John Camp

Blue Peter was due to contain an item about ringing last Monday. **Ringing-chat** recalled a previous such occasion. It was alleged that members of the CC PR Committee had resigned afterwards, though Andrew Wilby credibly denied this.

Chris Turner joined the list and found himself overwhelmed. It wasn't all about ringing! He tried to bring us back. Were method names called out in recent multi-method peals? Should they have been? No, said Philip Earis. He recited the now familiar mantra that grids were the way forward. Which is more important: the furtherance of art or the household chores? This was Mark Davies's response to an accusation that men were good at making excuses for not doing domestic tasks. Perfecting his latest composition clearly took precedence: it would give pleasure for generations. Why do we ring, anyway? Laura Dickerson thought that it wasn't just wanting a challenge. That sort of thinking led to beginners being thrown into rounds or methods before they could handle a bell properly.

Religion is not to be discussed in pubs, but the rule was broken. Probably my fault: I drew attention to the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Some heavy correspondence resulted, passing from the doctrine of salvation, via Dave Sullivan's astonishment at the age of the congregation at a local church, to (taking up a thread from change-ringers)

belief in an objective God. Jim Phillips resonantly stated that a church in which it was possible to believe anything was one which would end up believing nothing. Tony Parry's enquiry about which came first, Resurrection or Ascension, proved to be a reference to methods of those names.

The topic from **change-ringers** which migrated started with a flippant late-night message trashing the OUS (you know who you are, Philip). Then a former Oxford undergraduate related how he had preferred ringing with one of the local bands. This proved to be 30 years ago. Current and ancient members and friends of the OUS rallied to its cause. (I should declare an interest, here.) Like other university societies, it taught learners, provided ringers for Sunday service and helped to maintain intellectual momentum in ringing. From Cambridge, Frank King explained why a bell might go up wrong. (Physics, not the locals.) The **bell historians** were interested in Warner's first use of cast-iron headstocks. David Cawley related the history of now-redundant churches in Chatham. Wasn't Chatham the home of chavs?

Which brings us to vandalised toilets. The **nabbers** thought that 'derelict' might be an annotation in future editions of the toilet-friendly *Dove*. Perhaps foreseeably, a member had connections with the new online *Crockford* and was used as a conduit for the transmission of errors to the editorial team.

There is now a **FODS** choir, available for functions. Subscribers were dismayed that two of the band for 23-spliced had dropped out, resulting in a substituted attempt for Stedman Triples. Interesting questions were asked on **ringing-theory** about Stedman. Is there an extent of triples with calls at the end only of quick or slow sixes, or with no consecutive calls? Richard Grimmett had a romantic fondness for the principle. It had a lot of history. The Triples Eisteddfod in Birmingham had included traditional compositions.

Mini-ringerz asked what were the five or six things that potential young recruits should be told. Some serious and sensible answers – too long for this column – were given. Someone thought that $e=mc^2$ was a useless equation.

If you want to know more about ringers' e-mail lists and how to join them, send a blank e-mail to ringinglists@bellringers.org.

SECOND-HAND BELLS WANTED

We have a large number of enquiries for single bells for augmentations, for complete rings of bells and small bells for chiming

Please contact:

The Secretary, Keltek Trust, The Kloof, Lower Kingsdown Road, Kingsdown, Corsham, Wiltshire SN13 8BG

email: bells@keltek.org web site: <http://www.keltek.org>
Registered Charity No. 1061224

Keltek Trust – helping Christian churches world-wide to acquire second-hand bells 3094

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Contact the Central Council Librarian:

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Hereford HR1 1JF. Tel: 01432 271141
JCEisel@cccbrlibrary.freereserve.co.uk



*Compiled by David J Herschell
The Bell News and Ringers' Record
Saturday December 24, 1904*

The Rev. Edward J. G. Forse, M.A. (Hon. Secretary of the Oxford Diocesan Guild, East Berks and South Bucks branch) wrote the following about BELLS IN THE MIDDLE AGES: "It may interest readers... to have a few details of the ringing in the Cathedrals of the Middle Ages, extracted for the most part from the multitudinous information given in Prebendary Wordsworth's 'Medieval Services in England'. Dealing mainly with LINCOLN, he tells us how Matins was said at midnight in summer and at daybreak in winter. Before this the ringers had their duty to perform. The first of the five 'peals' began with the great bell knolling for half an hour, about an hour and a half before service... First and second peals went for half an hour each, the doors being opened, the lights lit, between the two, then the third and fourth for a quarter of an hour each; and the last for such a time as would allow a Canon to come from the most distant house in Minster Yard. It was the duty of the bell-ringer to provide lighted charcoal for the thurifers when there was incense to be burnt at T Deum... The day-bell was rung by the chaplain who said the 'Morrow' Mass, and after this, before the service, a great bell rang the Morning Peal (pella) in the south west tower (St. Hugh's)..."

'Lady Mass' was said about 7 or 8am, preceded by 'tinkles' (tinnitus). It seems that this may have been the 'Ave Bell' or Angelus. Folk were to say the 'Hail Mary' three times at each tolling of this bell, at 6am, at noon, and at 6pm. The late Sir C. Anderson recorded that the six 'Lady Bells' in the great Rood Tower at Lincoln, were chimed in the belfry on Lady Day to a chant..."

The article then continued with details of other times during the day when services were held and bells rung at Lincoln by two ringers, including: "An hour or more before Evensong the Dean (or Canon-in-course) went to wash his hands in the lavatory. This was the signal for the third bellringer (who held also the office of candlelighter) to ring the first of the five peals, just as for Matins..."

"After Evensong had been concluded, two great bells sounded to Compline, or on minor festivals first one great bell for a while, and then a small one... Then, at sunset in summer, and sometime after dusk in winter, the Curfew was rung. It was tolled on a great bell in choir-belfry or Rood Tower at Lincoln, or upon great festivals on all the bells, the canons sending their men, and a supply of drink, by way of assisting the regular ringers.

"This done, the three ringers-in-chief, who also held the respective offices of lay-sacrist, watchman, and candlelighter, had to search the Cathedral before locking it up, to see all was right and well. After this, forty tolls or strokes on 'Our Lady's Bells' in the belfry, and they retired to their supper of bread and beer in a wooden structure by the north-east aisle. Then the lay-sacrist and candlelighters took their well-earned rest, but the night-watchman had to keep awake, and it was suggested by the Cathedral statutes that if he had skill enough he might call the hours of the night upon a flute, until his duty ceased with waking the other two ringers that they might ring for the next day's (midnight) Matins..."